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Pathways to Citizenship: The Political Incorporation of Latino Immigrants

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents for their continuous love and support.

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This study explores the determinants of political incorporation of Latino immigrants in the U.S. from multiple perspectives. The objective is to identify the factors that promote political incorporation along a pathway to citizenship—specifically, those that promote naturalization; lead to a speedier citizenship acquisition process; and are associated with greater political participation. Findings show that the effect of transnational political activity on political incorporation varies according to the stage of immigrant integration. In particular, such behaviors have greater effects at the stage of citizenship acquisition. During the citizenship acquisition phase, associational ties to social institutions play an outsized role such that immigrants with these ties are more likely to seek out citizenship. Other findings show that once naturalized, Latino immigrant political participation is affected by acculturation processes and differences in ethnic origin. Findings also reinforce the continuing importance of ethnic origin as, Mexican immigrant political incorporation is distinct from other national origin groups.

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Introduction

The Latino electorate has been steadily increasing in size with each Presidential election cycle. In 2004 Latinos comprised 8% of the electorate, which increased to 9% in 2008, and 10% in 2012. This increase, however, has not been met with a concomitant rise in the rate of voter turnout. According to recent figures from the Current Population Survey, voter turnout rate among the eligible Latino population has stagnated, rising less than 1% in eight years. This has not been the case among other racial and ethnic minorities as Asian and Black voters have steadily increased their voter turnout rate in this same period.[1]

What are we to make of the fact that Latinos have struggled to increase their rate of electoral participation? Prior research has shown that the pool of naturalized immigrants within the Latino electorate depresses Latino voter turnout writ large (Pachon and DeSipio 1994). However, data from recent elections would appear to show otherwise, that in fact naturalized Latino voters participate at higher rates.

Bivariate comparisons from the Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys show a naturalized vs. U.S.-born gap in voting. In 2004 naturalized Latinos voted at a rate of 52.1% compared to 45.5% for native-born Latinos (Census 2005). In 2008, those same figures were 54.2% to 48.4%, respectively (Census 2009). The most recent available figures show that this gap persisted in 2012 with 53.6% of naturalized Latinos voting compared to 46.1% of native-born Latinos (Census 2013). However, once demographic variables such as income are held constant, naturalization has a negative effect on the likelihood of turning out to vote (DeSipio 1996a). Nonetheless, these rates of political participation among naturalized Latino immigrants are noteworthy given that many immigrants underwent their formative political experiences in another country.

Political participation in the electoral arena is only available to immigrants that have undergone the naturalization process. Therefore, any thorough study of political incorporation must explore the citizenship acquisition process as well. With this in mind, this project adopts a perspective of immigrant political incorporation that is a multi-stage process that follows an immigrant's trajectory from citizenship acquisition through to political participation.

The field of migration studies has established the importance of push- and pull-factors in the context of decisions to emigrate from their country of origin. Push factors are the social, political, and economic forces that drive immigrants to leave their home country such as economic hardship or political persecution. Pull factors, conversely, are positive forces that exist elsewhere including economic opportunity or the prospect of free political expression. The reasons for migration may have an effect on the degree to which immigrants wish to fully incorporate themselves into the U.S political system.

Foreign-born immigrants are also the group of individuals most likely to engage in transnational political behaviors. Immigrants have a variety of migration experiences and as such the degree of attachment to one's home country may vary considerably from one immigrant to the next. Some immigrants were brought to the U.S. as young children and regardless of the legality think of themselves as American. Other immigrants settled in the U.S. at a later stage of their life and likely had more social and cognitive ties to their country of origin. Today, those wishing to maintain their ties to their country of origin can do so in many ways. The proliferation of communication technologies has facilitated transnational activities such that immigrants can connect with family members more easily than migrants from a generation ago. Whether immigrants that engage in transnational behaviors are more or less likely to incorporate into the U.S. has received treatment before but results remain mixed.

Given the growing importance of Latinos in the U.S. writ large it is only fitting that the political incorporation of this all-important segment of that population be thoroughly explored. This study asks a simple question: What are the factors that facilitate the incorporation of Latino immigrants? There are also a series of more specific corollary questions including. For instance, do the reasons that immigrants choose to migrate affect their decision to naturalize? Do the reasons for seeking out naturalization affect political participation once they are citizens? Does the speed with which an immigrant naturalizes vary according to the strength of their ties abroad? Are immigrants that maintain ties to their country of origin via transnational behaviors less likely to naturalize and vote?

The Rise of the Recruits

In his study of Latino political participation DeSipio (1996b) spoke of three distinct elements within the Latino Voting Age Population (Latino VAP)—the 'reticent,' Latinos that are citizens who are not registered to vote; the 'reluctant,' registered citizens that do not vote; and 'recruits,' Latino immigrants that have yet to acquire citizenship. Over two decades later, the study of Latino naturalized immigrants remains important because the population has been, and will continue to be, a substantial portion of the Latino electorate. Indeed, for the past three presidential election cycles, over a quarter of all Latino voters were naturalized immigrants.[2] Estimates place the Latino population to be between 25%-30% by mid-century and voting-eligible Latino electorate at twice its size (40 million) in two decades (Pew Hispanic, 2012). Despite this extraordinary growth, the fact remains that the rate of naturalization among Latino non-citizens of Mexican origin pales in comparison to that of other immigrant groups. Non-Latino immigrants naturalize at a rate of 68% while Mexican legal immigrants do so at a rate of 36% (Pew Hispanic, 2013). Some argue that low levels of naturalization among Mexican

immigrants serve as an indication of a lack of integration (Vigdor 2008). Yet, there may be other forces that account for the disparity. In a survey of mostly Mexican immigrants in Texas, Freeman et al. (2002) found that the reasons for not filing to naturalize were rather straightforward including that many non-naturalized immigrants were simply not yet eligible. Other reasons were due in part to the difficult socio-economic conditions faced by immigrants. The authors recounted stories of immigrants that found immigration offices to be inaccessible and noted the difficulty of requesting time off from their jobs in order to visit immigration offices and complete appointments. As many as 1 in 5 immigrants, including those eligible and inclined to seek naturalization identified the application and processing fees, currently set at $680, as prohibitive (Freeman et al. 2002). Yet there are many other reasons for why immigrants choose to naturalize; while some seek naturalization as a way to protect their educational and economic gains with the rights of conferred by citizenship (Yang 1994) for others a strong desire to participate in politics can be motivating factor for naturalization (Alvarez 1987).

A natural point of departure for scholars exploring naturalization and political participation was to compare naturalized immigrant voting rates to those of native-born immigrants. Prior work has shown that the negative influence of naturalization is found among other immigrant groups, not just Latinos (Bass and Casper 2001). In their study of immigrant political participation Bass and Casper (2001) concluded that "the odds of registering among naturalized citizens are 36 percent lower and the odds of voting are 26 percent lower than those of native-born citizens" (p. 504). More recent work has established that naturalization, in and of itself, may not be an effective tool for promoting political participation (Levin 2013).

Transnationalism and Political Incorporation

Whether participation in transnational activities promotes or impedes political incorporation in the receiving country has been a much debated topic. Some scholars argue that maintaining transnational ties hurts national unity (Huntington 2004) or has negative effects on political incorporation (Stanton et al. 2007; Cain and Doherty 2006).

Differences regarding the effects of transnational engagement may pivot on normative views of political incorporation more generally. Scholars that view transnational political behavior as a dragging force to immigrant political incorporation may do so because they ascribe to the notion that assimilation, or the shedding of any and all cultural markers and customs, is a necessary step for entering American civic life. For their part, those that view transnational political behavior as a natural process of migration and adjustment more often than not reconcile transnationalism within the framework of acculturation processes.

Differences remain among scholars that seek to quantify the effects of transnationalism, with some arguing that transnationalism may aid immigrant incorporation (Jones-Correa 1998; Ramakrishnan 2005) and others suggesting that these behaviors have neutral or negligible effects ranging from small but positive (Barreto and Muñoz 2003) to no effect to slightly positive (DeSipio 2006) to contingent (Pantoja et al. 2013). Acculturation as opposed to assimilation understands physical and psychological shuffling that occurs between sending and receiving state as a bi-product of the migration experience. Moreover, the attendant rise of interconnectedness facilitated by technologically advances will likely increase the frequency of transnational engagement.

Data

The empirical section of this study relies on the 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS). The LNS consists of 8,634 interviews of self-identified Latino/Hispanic residents of the United States conducted between November 17, 2005 and August 4, 2006. The LNS offers a large sample size which allows for considerable subgroup analysis and boasts a total of 165 questions. One caveat to keep in mind is that immigrants make up approximately two-thirds of the weighted pool of LNS respondents which according to the 2006 Current Population Survey overestimates the actual foreign-born share of the Latino adult population which it places at 55.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). In order to combat this problem I will use the national-level weight provided in the sample so that my model estimates are as representative as possible.

Independent Variables: Reasons for Migration

Figure 1 displays respondents' reasons for immigrating to the United States. We see that on the one hand naturalized immigrants and non-citizens differ in a few regards. While the improving economic situation is the most popular response among both groups, almost two-thirds (65%) of non-citizens state that better economic opportunities are the major reason for immigrating to the U.S. while 40% of naturalized immigrants give that response which translates to a 25 percentage point gap. Naturalized immigrants are three times more likely to state that they immigrated for the sake of escaping political turmoil as 12% of naturalized immigrants state that response while only 4% of non-citizens give that response. Also, almost a quarter (23.5%) of naturalized immigrants state that their parents brought them as children to the U.S. while only about 8% of non-citizens say they were brought at a young age. The reasons for immigrations likely have an effect on the rate of citizenship acquisition as arrival to the U.S. at a young age indicates greater time spent in the U.S.

Independent Variables: Transnationalism

The LNS asked a series of questions regarding the transnational activities of foreign-born migrants. While about 20 questions were asked within the broad category of 'transnationalism' I have selected only a handful of variables that I believe are the most important for the purpose of analyzing political incorporation. My two main criteria for choosing a cluster of transnational behaviors were that they were either 1) a behavior that an immigrant can engage in from abroad 2) and/or a behavior that is specifically and sufficiently political in nature. Given these requirements the battery of transnational political behaviors selected for investigation include: the frequency with which an immigrant sends remittances to relatives abroad; whether an immigrant is a member of a home-town association; two measures of political behavior including whether an immigrant voted in an election in their home country prior to emigrating and the degree to which they pay attention to politics in their home country; two measures of voting behavior including whether an immigrant has since voted or donated to a candidate/political party while living in the U.S.; and a measure capturing the transitory nature of some immigrants that have returned to live for a period of time in their home country after immigrating to the U.S.

Independent Variables: Associational Ties

The role of social institutions in electoral participation is also explored here. In particular, immigrants with established ties to social institutions should be better equipped with the social capital necessary to navigate the naturalization process and their eventual entrance to the political process.

Among the naturalized pool of respondents a dichotomous variable registers those that have had some schooling in the U.S with the expectation that they will be more likely to be registered and to have voted than those that never received an education in the U.S. The

reasoning is that those foreign-born voters that have had some meaningful interaction with American school system should benefit from the corresponding socialization experience. Presumably, schools provide the necessary informational and civic resources to navigate bureaucratic hurdles that would otherwise complicate successful incorporation.

Two variables also measure the effect of associational ties to religious institutions through respondent's frequency of church attendance and a categorical variable for affiliation with the Catholic Church. Prior work has suggested that the high rate of Latino affiliation with the Catholic Church dampens Latino political participation because institutional features of the church fail to impart their Latino congregants with the necessary civic skills to participate (Verba, Brady, and Schlotzman 1995). Later research indicated that the opposite was true—that those that claimed Catholic affiliation were more likely to participate (Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001). In that same study Jones-Correa and Leal emphasized that church attendance, irrespective of denomination, was a more important factor. Therefore, both measures, religiosity and denomination, are used to gauge the effect of religion on political participation.

Associational ties to political parties are also used to control for the effects of political identity and incorporation of immigrants into the civic space. A respondent's identification with a particular political party along with a respondent's stated level of interest in politics should indicate a respondent's overall level of attachment to parties as social institutions and their general appetite for political participation.

Dichotomous measures for military service and labor union membership round out the institutional socialization cluster. Those respondents who claim that they or a close family member have served in the military are expected to be more likely to be registered and to have voted. Research by Leal (1999) finds that because Latinos begin with relatively few civic skills

the gains from military service are greater for them than for Anglos. Military service has also been shown to aid the economic mobility of Latino veterans as they display greater socioeconomic resources than their non-veteran co-ethnics (Leal et al. 2011).

A dichotomous variable capturing union membership and/or a union household is included to see whether associations with organized labor can boost political incorporation among Latino immigrants. The most extensive study of labor unions as a mobilizing force among Latinos shows that Latinos are more likely to register and to vote if they live in a union household (Francia and Orr 2014).

Political science has long since established the firm linkage between socioeconomic status and voter turnout (Berelson et al. 1954; Burns et al. 2001; Milbrath and Goel 1982; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980;). The first study to analyze cross-racial comparisons of political participation with a nationally representative sample of Latinos found that low levels of socioeconomic status were the likely reason for the lower rate of participation among Latinos (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). The subsequent question was whether those disparities would disappear once SES differences were taken into account. Calvo and Rosenstone (1989) found that even after controlling for SES, the gap in voting participation between Latinos and non-Latinos remained (see also Hero and Campbell 1996).

Ethnic group differences are also controlled for as prior research has shown that naturalization among Cubans operates as a catalyst for participation (DeSipio 1996a) likely because Cubans status as political refugees diminishes the institutional barriers to naturalization that Latinos of other ethnic groups face (Menjivar 2000). Other research has reached similar conclusions with regard to Cuban-Americans and their greater propensity to vote than Mexicans

and Puerto Ricans (Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Calvo and Rosenstone 1989; Hero and Campbell 1996; Wrinkle et al. 1996).

Results

Naturalization

Prior to conducting multivariate analysis on whether foreign-born immigrants complete the naturalization process, it is important to account for factors that may preclude immigrants from naturalizing in the first place. For this reason it is prudent to exclude those respondents that are ineligible for naturalization. As such, the 788 respondents that admitted to being undocumented are dropped from the analysis of citizenship acquisition because they are by definition ineligible for naturalization. The model is also limited to those immigrants that have been in the U.S. for over 5 years because immigrants only become eligible for naturalization after they have completed the 5 year residency requirement under legal permanent resident status.

Multivariate analysis begins by examining the determinants of naturalization among the subsample of foreign-born respondents. Ordered logistic regression analysis is conducted on the remaining 3,034 respondents of the foreign-born subsample, and the results in Table 1 show various statistically significant relationships. First and foremost, foreign-born immigrants with affiliations to social institutions are more likely to naturalize than those that do not have those ties. In particular, immigrants that are a union member or are part of a union household are more likely to complete the citizenship process.

Table 1 also shows that religious institutions and the military are positively associated with greater likelihood of naturalization though the relationships only reach the 90% level of confidence. Respondents that have strong ties to a place of worship in the form of greater church

attendance and those that have served in the military or have a close family member that served in the armed forces may be more likely to complete the naturalization process.

Immigrants that have completed a part of their education in the U.S. are more likely to acquire citizenship. I interpret this result to mean that acquiring some education operates as a powerful tool for the political integration of immigrants. Therefore, ties to the American education system offer a gateway to civic incorporation for immigrants that few other institutions can match. Public schools in particular, due to their general accessibility, are more accessible to immigrants than other social institutions that immigrants find difficult to enter.

The development of ties to the political system is also more likely to encourage immigrants to naturalize, an important initial step in the political integration process. Findings show that those that identify as Democrats and those that identify as Republicans are more likely to naturalize. It is important to note that the reference category for partisan identification is Independents. This means that both Democrats and Republicans are more likely to naturalize in comparison to political independents. Similarly, increased political interest is also associated with greater likelihood of naturalization.

[Table 2 Here]

With regard to reasons for immigration, I find that the impetus for coming to the U.S. is largely unrelated to whether an immigrant naturalizes. It is important to note that the reference category is respondents that chose to emigrate from their home country for the sake of escaping political turmoil. Only respondents that state that they were brought to the U.S. as a child are more likely to naturalize when compared to those that sought refuge because of political turmoil. This is to be expected given that arrival to the U.S. during childhood indicates that the respondent likely underwent some portion of their political socialization in the U.S.

Respondents that arrived as children are more likely to have developed the social ties that facilitate political integration and are more likely to develop the sense of belonging that accompanies the acquisition of citizenship. Respondents that emigrated from their home country in order to escape political unrest are more likely to have been older at the time of migration and thus were already politically socialized abroad. Immigrants that experience this displacement after they have undergone their formative years likely face greater social, emotional, and psychological hurdles to naturalization.

Differences in national ancestry are also shown to determine whether or not an immigrant naturalizes. Table 1 indicates that Mexican immigrants are less likely to successfully complete the naturalization process as evinced by the significance level and negative sign of the coefficient. This finding comports with evidence showing that Mexican immigrants have a far lower rate of naturalization than that of any other group (Pew 2013). While only significant at the 90% confidence level, being of Cuban ancestry is positively associated with citizenship acquisition.

Of the seven independent variables gauging transnational political behavior, only one proves to have an effect on an immigrant's acquisition of citizenship. Immigrants that voted in their country of origin prior to their migration are less likely to complete the naturalization process. In conjunction with the finding that immigrants who were brought as children to the U.S., this is further evidence that factors related to the age of migration affect political integration within the U.S.

The findings lend support to the importance of socioeconomic resources for naturalization; as household income increases, so too does the likelihood that an immigrant completes the naturalization process. Similarly, as immigrants make more gains in educational

attainment they are more likely to naturalize (likely in order to convert their skills into a secure financial future. In addition, immigrants that have made strides in economic mobility since their arrival to the U.S. may be likely more willing to bear the costs of naturalization. Indeed, the change in status from LPR to citizen means that an immigrant receives greater preference in sponsoring family members for entrance to the U.S. It could be the case that immigrants of sufficient economic means are more likely to set the process of family reunification in motion.

In sum, to the extent that reasons for immigration and transnational political behaviors have an effect on the completion of the naturalization process, they do so because they relate to an immigrant's place in their life stage. Results show that if an immigrant left their country of origin during adulthood they are more likely to naturalize. However, because the analysis controls for age itself, the effect suggests that the period of one's life at the point of migration, pre-adulthood or adulthood, has important ramifications for their future political incorporation. Immigrants arriving to the U.S. as adults are unique in the hurdles they face to political incorporation. Immigrants that migrated as adults must undergo a political re-socialization process in the U.S. that can be taxing. Adult migrants must accumulate a new set of learned norms and customs related to American civic life. This experience stands in contrast to that of immigrants that arrived as children and had likely not fully developed a sense of themselves politically in their country of origin. Childhood migrants are more equipped to undergo the citizenship acquisition process because they have developed the social ties to institutions that facilitate the political incorporation process.

The Speed of Citizenship Acquisition: Years on a Pathway to Citizenship

Another element of the citizenship acquisition process, namely, the length of time an immigrant spends in the U.S. prior to naturalization, may explain why naturalized voters

participate at lower rates than do native-born Latinos. The average amount of time spent in the U.S. prior to naturalization has been shown to be highest among Mexican and Canadian immigrants when compared to immigrants from other countries (Rytina and Caldera 2008; DeSipio 2011). This slower rate of naturalization among Mexican and Canadian immigrants in the U.S. may be partly explained by what scholars have referred to as the "reversibility hypothesis" (Bueker 2005; Portes and Mozo 1985; Portes and Rumbaut 1996) in which immigrants from sending countries that share a border with the receiving country believe that the chance of return is high due to their proximity.

Linear regression analysis using the Ordinary Least Squares estimator reveals the determinants of moving through the citizenship acquisition process over a longer rather than shorter period of time. Table 3 displays the analysis of factors that relates to the duration of time and immigrant spends in the U.S. prior to citizenship. Negative coefficients indicate that an independent variable is associated with a speedier citizenship acquisition process. Positive coefficients signify that a certain factor increases the time an immigrant spends in the U.S. without citizenship.

Table 3 shows that an immigrant's ethnic origin has the largest effect on the duration of time without citizenship. Immigrants that claim Mexican ancestry spend a full two more years in the U.S. without citizenship compared to immigrants from elsewhere. Being Cuban is associated with a much shorter residence in the U.S. without citizenship—in fact, results show that Cubans spend 5.2 fewer years without citizenship compared to immigrants from other backgrounds.

The length of the citizenship acquisition process varies according to ethnic background differences because of the contrasting historical relationship between the two countries. The interpretation of the ethnic origin effects likely rests on the fact that the U.S. immigration system

treats Mexican and Cuban migrants differently. That is, the largely welcoming posture that the U.S. adopts for Cuban migrants fleeing the Castro regime has meant that Cubans face fewer barriers to citizenship than other groups. Laws like the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 that conferred legal status on Cuban migrants set the tone for immigration policy moving forward. This stands in stark contrast to the treatment of Mexican immigrants, who have borne the brunt of strict enforcement policies. The absence of these special political considerations enjoyed by Cuban exiles has made the pathway to citizenship for Mexicans comparatively longer.

[Figure 2 Here]

The U.S. and Mexico have maintained a relationship rooted in economic considerations for the last century as the U.S. has relied on low-skilled Mexican labor. U.S. and Cuban relations have been almost exclusively informed by major political differences from the Cold War era. The nature of these relationships is reflected in differences between Mexican and Cuban immigrants today. Figure 2 illustrates the differences between Mexican and Cuban immigrants' reasons for seeking out U.S. citizenship. Cubans are more likely to give reasons relating to politics for why they sought U.S. citizenship. Cubans were more likely to state that they naturalized primarily to vote, secure legal political and/or civil rights, or to feel more American—while Mexican immigrants were more likely to say that family reunification and economic considerations were the main drivers of their naturalization.

[Table 3 Here]

Results in Table 3 show that immigrants who chose to naturalize primarily from a desire to vote took a longer time to naturalize, all else equal. All response categories related to this question are compared to the excluded category of naturalization for the sake of securing "legal, political rights, or civil rights." Therefore, the desire to participate politically may not be reason

enough to seek out citizenship as quickly as possible, at least when compared to those that did so in order to secure more rights as Americans. Instead, the immigrants that sought citizenship because they believed that it would mean greater economic opportunity were more likely to spend less time without citizenship when compared to immigrants that sought citizenship for the purpose of securing rights. Compared to those whose primary reason for naturalizing was to secure political and civil rights, those that do so for economic considerations spend 1.7 fewer years on a pathway to citizenship, all else equal. I interpret this result to mean that economic migrants may be more motivated to expedite the citizenship process in order to access more lucrative jobs compared to those that naturalize for other reasons.

Given the above results, it makes some sense that people of higher incomes should naturalize less quickly. Increases in the income scale have the effect of increasing the amount of years an immigrant spends on a pathway to citizenship while respondents that refused to state their income were more likely to spend less time in the U.S. without citizenship. While both relationships are significant at the 90% confidence level it may be the case that immigrants of lower income levels feel greater pressure to move through the citizenship process quickly in order to have better quality jobs at their disposal.

Findings with regard to education are in keeping with expectation as greater educational attainment translates to less time without citizenship. Also, immigrants that have received some of their schooling in the U.S. gain citizenship more quickly. An immigrant that has attended U.S. schools spends 1.7 fewer years in the U.S. without citizenship than an immigrant that never attended school after immigrating, all else equal. The findings relating to educational achievement comport with prior research suggesting that the more educated are more likely to

naturalize because they believe their educational gains will be more secure if they are citizens (Yang 1994).

As with the examination of the decision to naturalize, transnational political behaviors have largely no effect on how quickly an immigrant naturalizes except for political attention to home country politics. The positive and significant coefficient means an increase of one unit on the scale of political attention to home country politics translates to an additional .43 years before an immigrant attains citizenship. However, immigrants that state that they have a general interest in politics do spend less time navigating the citizenship process. The political interest question did not specify which country's politics receives the most attention, but taken together, these results show that political interest and attention can affect the immigrant integration process.

Female immigrants and immigrants that live in areas with a greater percentage of foreign-born people spend more time in the U.S. without citizenship. It is likely the case that the relatively marginalized status of female migrants in the work force results in distinct hurdles to the citizenship acquisition process compared to men. Immigrants living in neighborhoods that have a higher concentration of foreign-born immigrants also spend more time in the U.S. without naturalizing. I interpret this result regarding geographical context to mean that political incorporation suffers because immigrant neighborhoods are more likely to be isolated and underserved.

Electoral Participation

Lastly, I assess the factors that relate to the furthest stage along the political incorporation process—electoral participation. An important caveat is that prior to conducting the multivariate analysis of voter turnout among naturalized voters I found it necessary to drop 112 cases. These

respondents stated that they naturalized in 2005 and because the dependent variable is voter turnout in the 2004 presidential election they were not legally eligible to vote at the time.

Model 1 of Table 4 displays the logistic regression analysis of voting in the 2004 presidential election among 1,077 naturalized Latino immigrants.

[Table 4 Here]

The table shows a few important statistically significant results. First, the motivating reasons for citizenship affect political behavior at later stages of the political incorporation process. In particular, those immigrants that sought citizenship in order to vote are more likely to engage in electoral participation at least when compared to the reference category of naturalization for the sake of 'legal, political and civil rights'/ 'fair treatment under the law.' This stands in contrast to the negative relationship between naturalizing for economic reasons and voting. Taken together with the earlier results regarding citizenship acquisition, we are left with a subtle distinction. While economic considerations may motivate immigrants to seek out citizenship in the first place, those same motivations may depress political engagement after naturalization. Similarly, while the prospect of voting rights provides a weaker motivation for seeking out citizenship it may well drive them to the ballot box once they are eligible to vote.

Model 1 of Table 4 also reveals that most transnational behaviors have no effect on whether a naturalized immigrant decides to vote. The only transnational activity that influences the propensity to vote is voting in one's home country from the U.S. These transnational absentee voters that make use of their dual citizenship are also more likely to also participate in American elections. This suggests that political engagement is likely transferrable across borders such that people that are predisposed to participation in one country are also likely to engage with the political system of the country in which they settle.

Most ties to social institutions also prove to be positive for political incorporation. Immigrants that claim membership with either a social or cultural group are more likely to vote. Also, naturalized immigrants that identify with either of the two major political parties are also more likely to participate politically when compared to those that claim political independence. Likewise, political interest is also a strong predictor of political engagement.

Findings with regard to religious institutions are mixed. On the one hand, increased church attendance is associated with a lesser propensity to vote, but on the other hand, affiliation with the Catholic Church increases the likelihood of voting when compared to non-Catholics. This suggests that while some religious affiliation is positive for political incorporation, it could be the case that for some immigrants, greater commitment to religious practice stymies electoral participation. Despite the fact that immigrant's degree of religiosity is negatively associated with electoral participation runs counter to work of Jones-Correa and Leal (2001), it does corroborate their finding that affiliation with the Catholic Church increases political participation.

Finally, in order to fully assess the contours of immigrant political incorporation a crucial step is to offer a point of reference beyond this population. To that end, I also explored electoral engagement across Latinos of all immigrant generations. Table 4 displays the results from a logistic regression analysis conducted on 3,416 respondents that constitute the Latino Voting Eligible Population (VEP). Model 2 differs from Model 1 in that it is limited to the independent variables that were asked of all respondents. Therefore, questions pertaining to immigrant life are excluded as they were asked only of foreign-born respondents.

First, Model 2 in Table 4 shows that naturalized immigrants are no more or less likely to have voted in the 2004 election than third generation immigrants (reference category). Second generation immigrants are, however, more likely to have voted when compared to third

generation immigrants, all else equal. The major difference between second and third generation immigrants rests on the immigrant histories of a respondent's parents. Second generation immigrants were born in the U.S. to either one or two immigrant parents while third generation respondents were born in the U.S. to two native-born parents. This result differs from prior research that found naturalized immigrants are less likely to vote than native born immigrants after controlling for socioeconomic status (DeSipio 1996a; Bass and Casper 2001). Instead, these results appear to reinforce recent work suggesting that naturalized immigrants are participating at rates comparable to, or exceeding, those of the native-born (Barreto and Muñoz 2003; Barreto 2005; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001).

Other traditional predictors of voter turnout including greater socioeconomic status, identification with either of the two major parties, political interest, and mobilization by political parties are all positively associated with greater turnout. It is worth noting that as with model 1, Mexican ancestry is associated with a lesser likelihood of turning out to vote when compared to immigrants of other national origin groups.

[Table 5 Here]

Due to a pattern of results suggesting the distinctive nature of Mexican immigrant incorporation, a model exploring the contours of the electoral participation solely of Mexican immigrants was conducted. Table 5 displays the factors that explain voting in the 2004 election among naturalized Mexican immigrants. While the results largely echo the findings from Models 1 and 2 from Table 4, a key difference is that Mexican immigrants are more likely to be affected by issues related to the immigrant experience. In particular, Mexican immigrants are less likely to vote the longer they spend in the U.S. without citizenship as evinced by the coefficient for the variable "Years on a Pathway to Citizenship" which is negative and significant.

[Figures 3 and 4 Here]

Figure 3 and 4 illustrate the contrasting relationships between both explanatory variables of interest and voter turnout for Mexican immigrants. Figure 3 shows the negative effect of more years without citizenship on voter turnout while Figure 4 shows the positive relationship between greater time in the U.S. and voter turnout. The negative effect of more years on a pathway to citizenship in conjunction with the positive effect of a greater percentage of life in the U.S. results in a subtle, yet important, distinction. While the longer the amount of time an immigrant of Mexican descent spends in the U.S. is a significant factor in determining the likelihood of electoral participation, if a large portion of that time is spent as a non-citizen the less likely they are to vote after they acquire citizenship. Therefore, among Mexican immigrants, political participation is more likely to occur under circumstances of quick citizenship acquisition. Conversely, those immigrants that arrive in the U.S. and remain non-citizens for many years prior to naturalization are less likely to vote once eligible even when other factors are held constant.

That electoral participation varies according to the length of time an immigrant spends on a pathway to citizenship has important ramifications for immigration policy. The requisite length of time between the regularization of status for undocumented immigrants and eventual naturalization has emerged as the central point of contention between the two major parties. The most recent effort by Congress to overhaul the nation's immigration system, a comprehensive immigration reform bill passed by the Senate (S.B 744) featured a 13 year long- pathway to citizenship for the vast majority of beneficiaries. Findings herein suggest that a likely consequence of a lengthy pathway to citizenship for the undocumented is the dampening of political participation after the acquisition of citizenship.

Conclusion

This work has contributed some unique findings to the study of Latino immigrant political incorporation. By adopting a wider view of the political incorporation process beginning with the naturalization process through to the latter stages of political participation, the field of immigrant and migration studies can disentangle the multiple factors at work. The study of immigrant incorporation can be complicated because immigrants themselves must contend with a multitude of social forces. Indeed, scholars have come to think of the acculturation process as a messy one (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993); immigrants at once struggle to maintain ties with their home countries but must also attempt to acquire the necessary skills for a successful transition to life in the U.S.

This work has shifted the question of transnationalism from 'Do they matter?' to 'When do they matter?' Findings suggest that transnational ties are more likely to play a greater role during the early phase of immigrant political incorporation, in particular acquiring citizenship. Affiliations with social institutions are also shown to be crucial for completing the naturalization process. These findings neatly illustrate the dual nature of immigrant adaptation in the early phases of settlement. Immigrants are at once caught between maintaining ties to their country of origin even if that decreases the likelihood of U.S. citizenship while simultaneously beginning the process of developing connections with American social institutions.

In addition to the importance of transnationalism and social institutions this study also found evidence of the continuing significance of differences in ethnic origin and political incorporation. Mexican immigrants were shown to be less likely to complete the citizenship acquisition process; among those that did naturalize, they were more likely to spend a greater amount of time in the U.S. without citizenship; and naturalized Mexican immigrants were also

less likely to vote than did other national origin groups. In contrast, Cubans were frequently on the opposite end of the incorporation process on these same indicators. This suggests that the respective political histories between these two nations and the U.S. still structure the political incorporation of immigrants.

Notes

1. Asians have experienced a net increase of 3.1% (44.2% to 47.3%) and the largest net increase has been among Black voters, 6.2% (CPS, 2013). Though the increase in Black voter turnout between 2004 and 2012 may be in part attributed to their steadfast support of Barack Obama in his election and re-elected, it should be noted that participation rates among the Black VEP was already steadily increasing prior to 2004. Indeed, Black voters were the only group of the four racial and ethnic groups to increase their rate of voter participation with every subsequent presidential election from 1996 to 2012.

2. According to recent Current Population Survey naturalized citizens were 27.6% of all Latino voters in 2004, and in 2008 and 2012 that figure was 28.2% and 27.3%, respectively.

Methodological Appendix

Table 1. Logistic Regression Estimates of Naturalization

		Coeff.	Robust Std. Err.
Associational Ties			
Union Household		.62**	.210
Catholic		.00	.132
Church Attendance		.08#	.048
Veteran/Military Household		.27#	.163
U.S. Schooling		.29#	.166
Community Group Member		.01	.136
Democrat		.28*	.125
Republican		.52**	.184
Political Interest		.19*	.083
Reasons for Immigration			
Educational Opportunities		.33	.386
Family Reunification		.06	.324
Brought as Child by Parents		.6#	.334
Improve Economic Situation		.26	.282
Other		.24	.327
Transnationalism			
Freq. of Remittances		-.02	.033
Hometown Association Member		.12	.278
Political Attention to Home Country		.03	.057
Country of Origin Voter		-.48***	.128
Transnational Voter		.26	.238
Donated to Political Candidate Abroad		-.52	.400
Returned Home to Live		-.04	.200
Demographic Controls			
% of Life in U.S.		.03***	.004
Age		.05***	.005
Spanish Interview		-.51**	.163
Household Income		.1*	.040
Missing Income		-0.6*	.268
Educational Attainment		.16***	.034
Female		.13	.120
Homeowner		.29*	.127
Mexican		-.44***	.133
Cuban		.55#	.294
% foreign-born pop. in neighborhood		.00	.003
Constant		4.93***	.577
	Wald Chi2	473.17	
	Pseudo R2	.291	
	Observations	3034	

Table 2. Predicted Probability for outcome category; respondent completing naturalization

National Origin	
Mexican	.41
Cuban	.65
Church Attendance	
Never Attend	.40
Holidays Only	.42
Once a Month	.44
Once a Week	.46
More than Once a Week	.49

Table 3. Linear Regression Estimates of Years on a Pathway to Citizenship

	Coeff.	Robust Std. Err.
Associational Ties		
Union Household	.59	.692
Catholic	-.48	.537
Church Attendance	-.13	.213
Veteran/Military Household	-.10	.543
U.S. Schooling	-1.7**	.589
Community Group Member	.06	.436
Democrat	.26	.537
Republican	-.41	.694
Political Interest	-.91**	.351
Reasons for Naturalization		
Voting	2.1***	.564
To Be More American	-.11	.974
Other Reason	-.45	.775
Government Benefits	-1.54	1.057
Family Reunification	-.55	.977
Economic Opportunities	-1.69#	.868
Transnationalism		
Freq. of Remittances	.17	.130
Hometown Association Member	-1.04	.881
Political Attention to Home Country	.43*	.211
Country of Origin Voter	-.48	.554
Transnational Voter	-.38	1.029
Donated to Political Candidate Abroad	-.04	1.549
Returned Home to Live	.56	.821
Demographic Controls		
% of Life in U.S.	.2***	.015
Age	.31***	.023
Spanish Interview	1.04#	.600
Household Income	.25#	.144
Missing Income	-1.83#	1.020
Educational Attainment	-.29#	.158
Female	.8#	.462
Homeowner	-.71	.549
Mexican	2.12***	.522
Cuban	-5.26***	.910
% foreign-born pop. In area	.03**	.012
Constant	-13.4***	2.062
R2	.452	
Observations	1179	

Table 4. Logistic Regression Estimates of Voting in 2004 Presidential Election

	Model 1. Naturalized Immigrants		Model 2. All Latino VEP	
	Coeff.	Robust Std. Err	Coeff.	Robust Std. Err
Naturalized Citizen	--	--	.13	.176
Second Generation	--	--	0.27#	.161
Associational Ties				
Union Household	.19	.324	.12	.153
Catholic	.61**	.206	.09	.121
Church Attendance	-.185*	.084	.02	.045
Veteran/Military Household	-.34	.225	.18	.123
Community Group Member	.36#	.195	.15	.096
Democrat	.68**	.230	.65***	.129
Republican	.48#	.280	.51**	.165
Political Interest	.56***	.153	.63***	.088
Mobilization by Party/Candidate	.9***	.260	.7***	.135
Demographic Controls				
Mexican	-.48#	.253	-.45***	.141
Cuban	-.49	.421	-.13	.281
Age	.07	.023	.06***	.004
Household Income	.17**	.065	.11**	.036
Missing Income	-1.07*	.420	-.92***	.214
Educational Attainment	.09	.064	.27***	.041
Female	.4#	.206	.23*	.115
Homeowner	-.08	.233	.03	.126
% foreign-born pop.	.00	.005	.00	.003
Immigrant Experience				
Years on a Pathway	-.04	.035	'--	'--
Years Since Naturalization	-.03	.034	'--	'--
% of Life in U.S.	.02#	.014	'--	'--
Spanish Interview	.13	.233	'--	'--
U.S. Schooling	-.32	.254	--	--
Reasons for Naturalization				
Voting	.7*	.300	--	'--
To Be More American	.46	.400	'--	'--
Other Reason	.04	.358	'--	'--
Government Benefits	-.12	.398	'--	'--
Family Reunification	.25	.392	'--	'--
Economic Opportunities	-.66*	.334	'--	'--
Transnationalism				
Freq. of Remittances	.01	.060	--	'--
Hometown Association Member	-.36	.369	'--	'--
Political Attention to Home Country	.03	.094	'--	'--
Country of Origin Voter	.27	.230	'--	'--
Transnational Voter	.8#	.455	'--	'--
Donated to H.C. Political Candidate	-.81	.690	'--	'--
Returned Home to Live	-.48	.378	'--	'--
Constant	-5.09***	1.292	4.55***	.435
Wald Chi2	208.57		452.38	
Pseudo R2	0.289		0.275	
Observations	1077		3416	

Table 5. Logistic Regression Estimates of Voting in 2004 Election Among Mexican Naturalized Immigrants

		Coeff.	Robust Std. Err.
Associational Ties			
Union Household		.32	.403
Catholic		.89**	.261
Church Attendance		-.28*	.114
Veteran/Military Household		-.40	.291
Community Group Member		.45*	.230
Democrat		.50#	.278
Republican		.44	.379
Political Interest		.64**	.199
Mobilization by Party/Candidate		1.02***	.301
Demographic Controls			
Age		.11**	.034
Household Income		.13	.084
Missing Income		-.98#	.543
Educational Attainment		.143#	.079
Female		.35	.260
Homeowner		-.30	.289
% foreign-born pop.		.00	.007
Immigrant Experience			
Years on a Pathway		-.09#	.047
Years Since Naturalization		-.09#	.047
% of Life in U.S.		.05*	.019
Spanish Interview		.14	.297
U.S. Schooling		-.30	.320
Reasons for Naturalization			
Voting		.57	.374
To Be More American		.51	.532
Other Reason		.04	.471
Government Benefits		.18	.476
Family Reunification		.27	.525
Economic Opportunities		-.39	.418
Transnationalism			
Freq. of Remittances		.05	.078
Hometown Association Member		-.83#	.490
Political Attention to Home Country		.01	.124
Country of Origin Voter		.14	.305
Transnational Voter		1.00#	.564
Donated to Political Candidate Abroad		-1.28	1.102
Returned Home to Live		-.66	.506
Constant		7.16***	1.732
	Wald Chi2	130.39	
	Pseudo R2	0.282	
	Observations	608	

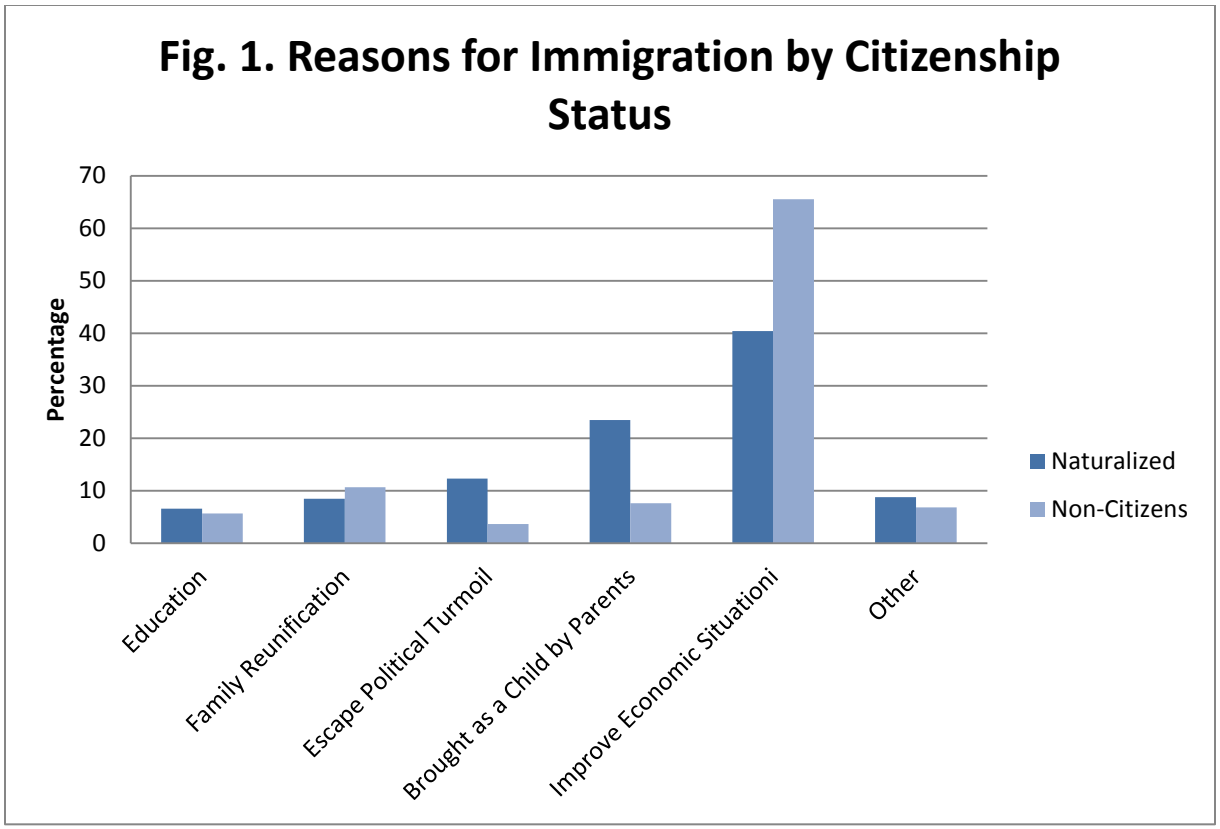


Fig. 1. Reasons for Immigration by Citizenship Status
Percentage
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Education
Family Reunification
Escape Political Turmoil
Brought as a Child by Parents
Improve Economic Situationi
Other
Naturalized
Non-Citizens

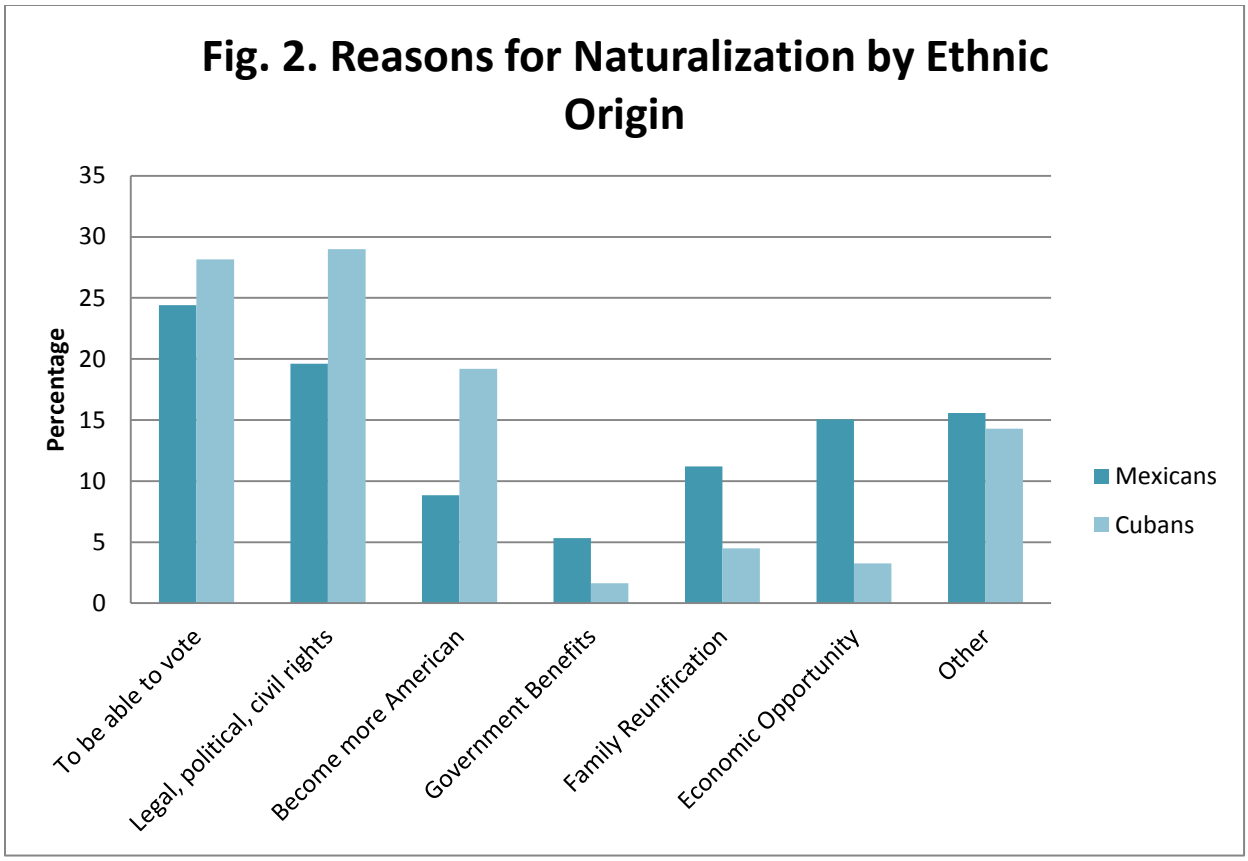


Fig. 2. Reasons for Naturalization by Ethnic Origin
Percentage
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
To be able to vote
Legal, political, civil rights
Become more American
Government Benefits
Family Reunification
Economic Opportunity
Other
Mexicans
Cubans

Figure 3. Probability of Voting in 2004 Presidential Election among Mexican Naturalized Immigrants Given Years in the U.S. Prior to Acquiring Citizenship

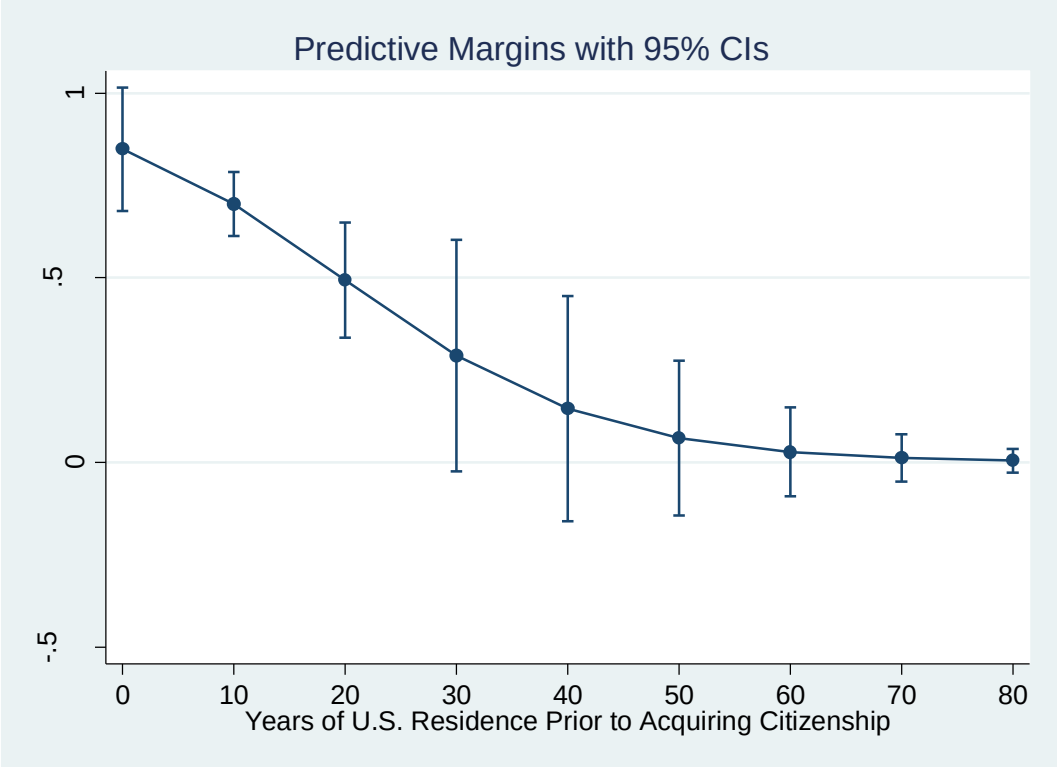
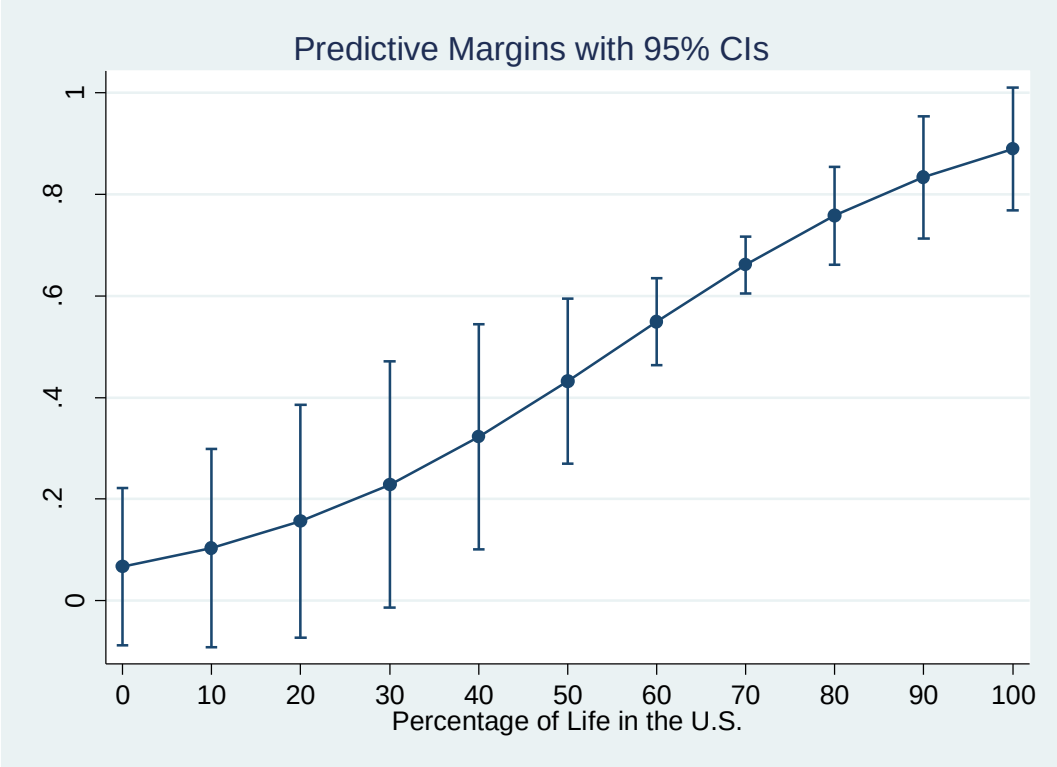


Figure 4. Probability of Voting in 2004 Presidential Election among Mexican Naturalized Immigrants Given Years Percentage of Life in the U.S.



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